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SUBJECT: THREE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES STALL BURUNDIAN CEASE FIRE TALKS

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY: South African Special Envoy Kingsley Mamabolo outlined the three most contentious issues facing the Joint Verification Monitoring Mechanism (JVMM) and briefed the diplomatic corps on the status of implementation after a meeting with the National Liberation Front (FNL) on April 2. The three points of disagreement concern the demobilization of FNL soldiers and subsequent reintegration into the Burundian Army, the placement of FNL officials in substantial government positions, and the difficulty of conducting negotiations when FNL leadership remains in Dar Es Salaam. Mr. Mamabolo also stressed that the mandate of the facilitator of the JVMM is not to renegotiate the terms of the ceasefire agreement, but to implement them. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) The implementation of the September 7 ceasefire agreement between the FNL and the Government of Burundi (GOB) stalled for the third time during the week of March 26. In a bid to support the JVMM, South African Special Envoy Kingsley Mamabolo traveled to Bujumbura on April 3 to consult with the two parties. There are three issues causing friction, according to Mamabolo. The first is a FNL request that when the FNL army gathers in assembly areas for demobilization, the Burundian National Army (FDN) stands down in their respective barracks. During this time, an international military organization such as the AU or UN will oversee the security in Burundi and ensure that neither FNL nor FDN soldiers are subjected to arbitrary arrest or mistreatment. After the troops are sequestered, the FNL then requests that the two armies become one unified force in incremental steps. The GOB sees this plan as untenable.

¶3. (U) The second FNL demand is for high level government positions for some of its members. The GOB responded that per the Constitution, high-level government positions cannot be awarded to unelected officials. Mr. Mamabolo told the diplomatic corps that he asked President Nkurunziza to prepare a structure that would permit FNL officials to participate at some level in government activities. President Nkurunziza responded by asking for FNL officials' Curricula Vitae to determine where in administrative or diplomatic positions the officials might work.

¶4. (U) In a widely published account in the government-owned newspaper Le Renouveau, President Nkurunziza recently asked why FNL party head Agathon Rwasa will not return to Burundi to facilitate the implementation of the cease fire agreement. President Nkurunziza stated publicly that the return of Rwasa would expedite the successful resolution of the numerous implementation impasses. Mr. Mamabolo indicated to the diplomatic corps that the FNL worries about the physical security and potential incarceration of Rwasa if he were to come to Burundi, even though FNL members have been granted blanket immunity.

¶5. (U) The FNL is attempting to renegotiate terms of the ceasefire agreement, asserted Mr. Mamabolo. He stressed that the mandate of the facilitator in the JVMM is not to renegotiate terms, but rather to implement the terms of the agreement as they are written. Mr. Mamabolo said the facilitators would continue to work behind the scenes to find

a compromise in advance of the next scheduled meeting of the JVMM at the end of April.

¶6. (U) Mr. Mamabolo also made a point of saying the facilitator has not "promised anything to anyone" despite reports circulating in Bujumbura. Specifically, he wanted to ensure the diplomatic community received information about the negotiations directly from the facilitator, saying that purported "FNL spokespersons" recently provided misleading information about the negotiating process.

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT: Although Mamabolo was careful not to name names, it was clear that the "FNL spokesperson" to whom the facilitator referred is South Africa's Institute for Strategic Studies analyst Jan van Eck (reftel). Mr. van Eck arrived in Bujumbura on March 25 and has met with both government officials and FNL representatives. Van Eck traveled to Dar Es Salaam over the weekend of March 31 to meet with FNL leaders there and then returned to Burundi, where he will remain until April 8. END COMMENT

BREITER